

PROLOGUES  
And  
EPILOGUES,

WRITTEN FOR THE

*L. D. T.*

ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS.

1797—8—9.

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—It is nothing, nothing in the world,  
Unless you can find sport in their intents.

SHAKESPEARE.

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TO

## S. STREATFEILD, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

I will venture to say, that every member of our little Theatre shall approve of the dedication of these pieces to yourself, and unite with me in acknowledging the kindness of your countenance and support.

We have to thank you, sir, for overcoming a prejudice against theatricals, and drawing a limit which has preserved the *L. D. T.* from the fear of any unpleasant imputation. The simple manner in which your Laundry was adapted to our purpose and the privacy of our performances, obviated every objection that could be made on account of their expence, and the principal charges that are urged against the study of the Drama as a relaxation, the licentiousness of the best comedies, on the one hand, and the romantic ideas inculcated, on the other, could not effect us ; our only attempt

in

in sentiment was to inspire benevolence, and your plaudits were not bestowed on the bewitching libertinism of Congreve or Vanbrugh. But this vindication will be thought superfluous, when it is remembered, that our society was not entirely composed of school-boys or such enthusiasts as myself. The sanction we received justifies the presumption, that, when our little circle shall be dispersed and your children engaged in more important parts on life's great stage, they will with pleasure call to mind the innocent amusements of Long Ditton.

With regard to the following trifles, they need no apology, the applause, which attended their delivery, has stampt their character.

I am,

Your very affectionate Son,

T. S.

## PROLOGUES & EPILOGUES.

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### EPILOGUE TO THE GUARDIAN,

*Spoken by Miss HARRIET ARBUTHNOT, January 7, 1797.*

T. LANGLEY.

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UPON my word, good folks—is this your way ?  
What—won’t you let me have one little say ?  
This is our crusty *Guardian’s* whim, for certain,  
That I’m excluded from behind the curtain !  
The little gentleman, with selfish pride,  
When I propos’d to act, thus peevish cried,  
“ Poh ! Nonsense ! ‘She pretend to act, Lord bless her !’  
“ How can she squeeze around the *Laundry Dresser* ?  
“ My skill, if she is by, I ne’er can shew,  
“ She’ll mar my powers by some unlucky blow.”  
His powers, forsooth, fit for *Gir Gilbert Pumpkin*,  
For *Little Isaac* or for *Tony Lumpkin*.  
My sister too, for *Harriet* is too airy ;  
She’d better feed her ducks, and mind her dairy.  
The jaunty air, indeed, of little BET  
Just fits the flippance of the pert *Soubrette*.  
*Sir Charles* is humour’d to the life by *SPEIDELL*,  
And *WILL* has charm’d me—but, ‘twill make him idle.  
Well, notwithstanding you have us’d me so,  
I’ll say one friendly word before I go.

Amidst

Amidst the feelings *Harriet's* cares excite,  
 Do not forget the real **HARRIET** quite ;  
 Still may you, all of you, of every age,  
 Perform a pleasing part on Nature's stage,  
 And be my part, in every act, to prove  
 A friend's affection and a sister's love.

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### EPILOGUE TO THE GUARDIAN.

*Spoken by Mrs. Langley in the Character of Harriet,*

*January 1, 1798.*

T. Langley.

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“ **V**ARIOUS the stations of the scenic art  
 “ Since Father Thespis spouted from his cart ;”  
 For, not in splendid Theatres alone  
 The Muses hold their court and raise their throne :  
 Our stage-struck manager, in all his fury,  
 Sighs not for Covent-Garden or Old Drury,  
 But here a humble Theatre can raise,  
 And change a *Laundry* with a little baize.  
 High on an *ironing-board* you're plac'd, whilst here,  
 Fresh from the *suds*, poor simple I appear.  
 Why all this nonsense pray from me require ?  
 I've got too many *irons in the fire*.  
 Quite *starch'd* and *blued* with all this noise and pucker,  
 Methinks I feel like *Nurse's Sunday tucker*.  
 Well, if we've *mangled* what we just have ended,  
 You know this place for *mangling* was intended ;

Yet,

Yet, sure, some little skill has been display'd,  
For **SHEPHEARD** clapp'd like any *laundry-maid*.

My young allies, alarm'd left ills besal 'em,  
Have sent me forth to speak these what-d'ye-call-em.  
If in or out this house, some anxious friend  
Sees many dangers on our mirth attend,  
Dreads that the world into our sports may enter,  
That little world of which we form the centre,  
Blame not our festive pleasantries, nor fear  
That aught but innocence can harbour here :  
Behind these scenes, my *Heartly* would oppose  
His vet'ran energies to virtue's foes,  
Check each wild ardor, watch the least alarm,  
And shield unwary youth from every harm.  
Before the curtain see what guards arise,  
What well-known, valued forms attract my eyes !  
Parents alive to every op'ning pow'r  
And Friends delighted by this cheerful hour,  
The real **HARRIET** too who 'midst our band,  
Gave to our early scene a helping hand,  
And he whose lessons fondly we attend,  
Sworn foe to vice and virtue's ardent friend.  
Whilst such approve our harmless, guiltless plan,  
" We fear no ill, and pity those who can."

## PROLOGUE

## PROLOGUE TO THE JEW.

*January 3, 1799.*

T. STREATFIELD.

**A**MIDST more serious thoughts, more noble views,  
Each frames some scheme, some darling whim pursues,  
The Patriot Orator, warm from the debate,  
The close of which decides his country's fate,  
A thoughtless respite seeks, and in a trice,  
Pushes the bottle round, or hurls the dice.  
Gownsmen from solid argument repair,  
And joy to build their castles in the air.  
Each has his hobby, and the Cynic too,  
Deviates in private, though he snarls at you.  
Happy is he with worldly cares opprest,  
Who finds his solace in his own pure breast,  
Who in the social circle can rejoice,  
Unmov'd by fashion's fascinating voice.  
Let those to foreign aid, to opiates fly,  
Who ne'er have known domestic harmony.

Hoping to find a friendly circle here,  
We seek not flattery, but we feel no fear,  
Assured the entertainment we present  
You will interpret as by us 'tis meant,  
To cheer our circle, to excite some jest,  
Perchance, a Christmas gambol at the best;  
A relaxation which we all require,  
Partaken here instead of round the fire,

Harmlefs,

Harmless, and, could we hope to touch the heart,  
Some useful lesson likely to impart,  
To hush blind prejudice, dry the luff'ers tears,  
And shield the outcast from unmanly sneers.  
This is our Author's moral. We pursue  
His generous theme, and dread no frowns from you.

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## EPILOGUE TO THE JEW,

*Spoken by MRS. LANGLEY and MR. N. GARRY, in the  
Characters of Dorcas and Jabal, January 3, 1799.*

T. LANGLEY

*Dorcas.* COME Jabal, now our master's gift we'll share,  
And chat awhile, and take our homely fare.  
Here, pick this herring; there's an onion warming.  
*Jabal.* Oh, how delicious! Bless my stars, how charming!  
This nice salt-butter, how it oils my leather!  
*Dorcas.* There's nothing like it to keep out the weather.  
*Jabal.* 'Twill make me dry tho'! *Dorcas.* Never mind  
my lad,  
There's some small beer. *Jabal.* (*drinks*) 'Tis not so  
very bad!  
Come here's my master; he's a good old Jew.  
*Dorcas.* Give me the mug, come, here's Sir Stephen too.  
*Jabal.* Ah, mother Dorcas, you're as deep as Newgate:  
Not in this house those plump round cheeks did you get.  
Where did you learn to cook? I know your tricks;  
Without some straw you never could make bricks.

B

Sir

*Sir Stephen's* pantry.—*Dorcus*. Hush, good *Jabal*, pray,  
I've known *Sir Stephen* in a civil way.

*Jabal*. Ah, mother, you've had many a greasy chin,  
While I've been starving in an empty skin,  
Feeding on Hebrew, meat nor moisture knowing  
Whilst merrily your fat old chops were going.

*Dorcus*. Well *Jabal*, hold, and don't be so voracious,  
*Sir Stephen* and our Jew are now quite gracious.

What if I take you to *Sir Stephen's* ? there  
At Christmas I have known some decent fare.

*Jabal*, Will you ? Oh, mercy ! oh, the sav'ry hash,  
Rich sauces, calipee and calipash !

But, hold, if whilst his victuals I am munching,  
*Sir Stephen* finds me out and spoils my luncheon ?—

You know he's turn'd a captain. *Dorcus*. Peace you  
varlet.

*Jabal*. Oh dear, I've seen him all in green and scarlet !

*Dorcus*. Well, never fear, for you must understand,  
I have the CAPTAIN under my command.

And now, to prove it, come with me, good *Jabal*,  
We'll have a mug of stingo on the table ;

And, 'ere our thirsty souls are quite supplied, ,  
We'll drink the *Bertrams*, *Radcliffes*, and the *bride* ;

Push round the nippakin, and stir the fire,

And toast Old *Sheva* and the DITTON SQUIRE,

## PROLOGUE

## PROLOGUE TO THE ROAD TO RIDICULE,

*Spoken by Mr. W. S. STREATFIELD. January 9th, 1799.*

T. SPEIDELL.

WHY what can I tell them ? 'Tis dev'lish absurd !  
(*Speaking behind the Scenes.*)

T. Streatfield. Oh, say what you please; you can ne'er  
want a word—

If you love me go on. W. S. S. Well well then; (*entering*)  
I come,

To speak for a wight by your presence struck dumb.  
Who tells me, whene'er I would rally his fears,  
Where he meant to raise laughter, he dreads to raise sneers:  
That, no word of defence there is left him to say,  
He, at least, should have written a classical play;  
From Homer's strong coloring, his characters taken,  
Thumb'd o'er Aristotle, Locke, Horace, and Bacon:  
Or, if those old bucks he had thought too pedantic,  
With a Tragical Pantomime, drove ye all frantic.  
Should, 'midst Thunder and Lightning, a Spectre ingulph  
here;  
Made you blind to his faults with the smoke of his sulphur.  
Or, as that would be stale, he a new trick might shew,  
And raise one in steams from the *Wash-house* below.  
But, alas ! as it is, he must run from his post—  
All his spirits are vanish'd for want of a ghost.

Then

Then I, gently endeav'ring to obviate these cavils,  
Told him, none of his party delighted in devils.  
But he, inattentive to all my fine sermon,  
Sigh'd,—“ Fool that I was not to copy the German;  
“ With their pathos and sensiment, strain'd ev'ry feeling.”  
Till you all might have thought there was virtue in stealing.  
That a wife who has tript's to be valued alone,  
As crack'd fiddles, when glued, are improv'd in their  
tone;  
Drawn a libertine youth with such graces, such beauty,  
You'd think, filial rebellion was, almost, a duty;  
Painted suicide glorious—and thus, in a trice,  
In the language of virtue inculcated vice.  
But this had he tried, still his hopes would deceive him,  
His audience are all too well taught to believe him.  
This he ne'er would attempt,—But, tho' thus far I've got,  
I've ne'er said what he has wrote, but what he has not.  
Well, the bev'rage, we give for your solace this hour,  
Is a mixture, like punch, of half sweet and half sour;  
Of its spirit we boast not, but hope you may find,  
'Mongst our jumble of characters, some to your mind.  
This I'm order'd to say, he endeavour'd to form  
One virtuous, but wreck'd by adversity's storm;  
But he cramm'd it so brimful of morals and sorrow,  
If you heard all he wrote, you'd not rise till to'morrow.  
So it's sadly curtail'd, in two short acts compress'd,  
And he trusts, your good-nature will fancy the rest.

EPILOGUE

## EPILOGUE TO TON AND ANTIQUITY,

*Spoken by MR. Langley, in the Character of Mr. Mummy,*

*January 9, 1799.*

T. Langley.

SO ends our frolick; ere the curtains fall  
Releases you and gives repose to all,  
Say, shall old *Mummius*, no modern friend,  
Discuss the dangers which such sports attend,  
And ponder well the ills which may befall  
Our party, from this rage Theatrical?  
Should, O ye Powers, the learned *Doctor GARRY*,  
That deep, profound, stupendous antiquary,  
Struck with extreme virtù, prove such a queer dog,  
To grope for *Deborah* in *Saint Bennet Shearhog*;  
To clear his throat and cure his gutt'ral burr,  
Should he think fit to eat an Emperor;  
Or, crack'd by acting, should he play strange freaks,  
And get a knack of swallowing antiques—  
Or should our active Manager conceive a  
Deep-rooted passion for the part of *Sheva*,  
Turn Jew, quit Oriel, cut all College work,  
And cock his nose up at a loin of pork,  
Call bacon eating beastly and a crime,  
And shirk a bit of ham at Luncheon-time,  
Why then indeed, poor *Doctor NICK*'s undone,  
And Tom's, I'll swear, no longer Father's son.

But

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But should the martial habit, the cockade,  
The boasting coxcomb, or Newmarket blade,  
Have charms to captivate the youthful mind,  
Lead it from path for which it was design'd,  
Should *Eadburga* forget what has been taught her,  
And prove herself too much a *modern daughter*,  
Then with the learned *Doctor* I'll retreat,  
And dig for pavements in the *Watling Street*;  
My friends,—if tempted by such dream, I see 'em,  
I'll run and hide me in the *Hypogeum*,  
In whose recesses six-foot folks don't venture  
And only Five-foots, like myself, can enter.

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